

# SEASON

Calendar Church of St. Paul, L.

January, 1691.

Being the first of the Year, of the  
Lectures, & the Honorable

Robert Boyle, Esq;

By SAMUEL BRADFORD, M. A.

Rector of St. Mary le Dow.

L O N D O N,

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# SEAL



THE  
OFFICE OF THE  
SECRETARY OF THE  
TREASURY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.  
JANUARY 1, 1900

## TO THE

Most Reverend Father in God,  
*Thomas* Lord Archbishop of *Canterbury*;  
*Sir Henry* Asbburst, Baronet;  
*Sir John* Rotherham, Serjeant at Law;  
*John Evelyn* Senior, Esq;

Trustees appointed by the Will of the Honourable

*Robert Boyle* Esq;

Most Reverend and Honour'd,

**I** Humbly present to you this, with the following Discourses, which I Publish in Obedience to your Order, and with my thankful acknowledgment of the Honour you have done me, in appointing me your Lecturer for the Year ensuing.

The best way of establishing any Truth is, by making a fair and just Representation of it, Truth being to the Mind, what Light is to the Eye, always discernable, where there is no defect in the Organ. My design therefore is, to endeavour so to represent the

the Christian Revelation, that it may appear by it's own Light, and by that means, as far as may be, to prevent Objections, before they are rais'd. And because I am fully perswaded, that the true Cause of Infidelity, where the Gospel is publish'd, is some violent Indisposition in the Minds of men. I thought it expedient to begin with laying down the Qualifications, which are necessary for such Persons, as shall concern themselves about this Subject.

I am very sensible of my want of Ability, proper to this Undertaking: but I humbly beseech that God and Saviour, in whose Cause I am engag'd, to enable me in some measure to promote the pious and generous Design of our Honourable Founder, a Person who convinc'd the World, that Christianity is consistent with excellent natural Parts, and great Learning; as well as with noble Birth, and good Breeding. After this I have nothing farther to do, but to rely upon that Goodness which so freely employ'd me, favourably to interpret the Endeavours of,

Most Reverend and Honoured,

Your most obliged

and humble Servant,

Samuel Bradford.

JOHN



JOHN VI. 45.

*It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.*

**T**HE Honourable Founder of these Lectures having appointed them for proving the Christian Religion against notorious Infidels, *viz.* Atheists, Deists, Pagans, Jews, and Mahometans, my design is, by God's Assistance, to direct my following Discourses principally against the second sort of these Adversaries to our Profession, the *Deists* I mean, properly so call'd, those who are not sunk so much below humane Nature, as to call into question the Author of their Beings, or to deny that Providence by which the World is govern'd, and themselves and all things in it preserv'd and taken care of: but yet pretend to disbelieve, or at least doubt concerning the Christian Revelation.

It must needs seem strange to those who are thoroughly convinc'd of the Truth of Christianity, and discern very plain and strong Evidence for the

## 1 The Qualifications requisite towards

confirmation of their Faith in all the parts of it, that there should be any, who being educated where this Religion is profess'd, should either remain or become Infidels; especially if at the same time they seriously own the Principles of *natural Religion*, to which those of *reveald* are so very agreeable.

How far such men are in good earnest, is best known to God, and to their own Consciences: but if there be any such, 'tis certainly worth the while to convince them; and I should hope it would be no great difficulty to do it, provided they may be prevail'd upon to do what is absolutely necessary, and highly reasonable on their part, in order to their receiving and owning such conviction.

For which reason I have chosen to begin with these Words, wherein we are inform'd by our Lord himself, what sort of Persons those are, who are qualified for receiving him and his Doctrine, viz. such as are taught of God, such as have heard and learn'd of the Father.

Ver. 38, The occasion of the Words was this. Our blessed Saviour had been saying, that *He came down from Heaven*; at this some of the Jews murmur'd, saying, *Is not this Jesus the son of Joseph, whose Father and Mother we know? How is it then that he saith, I came down from Heaven? To which our Lord reply'd, not by proposing at that time any Arguments to convince them, that he really did come*

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come down from Heaven; but by hinting to them the true cause of their unbelief, and letting them understand, that considering their temper, which he very well knew, he was not at all surpris'd at their rejecting him. *Murmur not*, saith he, *among your selves: No man can come to me, except the Father, which hath sent me, draw him.* But may not the Father draw men, and they not follow him? Yes certainly, as well as he might be said to have purged Israel, and yet that Israel was not purged; and therefore it follows in the next Words, *It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.* Ver. 43.  
44.  
Ezek. 24. 13.

*It is written in the Prophets*, that is, this is a Prediction you may find in divers places in the Books of the Prophets, in the Old Testament; *They shall be all taught of God*, that is, in the days of the Messiah, the World shall be blest with more plentiful Instruction from Heaven, there shall be a greater measure of Divine Knowledge imparted by God to Mankind, together with a larger Effusion of the Divine Spirit upon the Members of God's Church, whereby they shall be taught the Will of God more plainly and fully, than in times past. Particularly the Prophet *Isaiah*, foretelling the state of the Church in the days of the Messiah, hath these very words which our Lord citeth, *All thy children shall be taught of the Lord.* Isa. 54. 13.

*Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me;* as if he

had said, Whosoever therefore will come unto me, that is, receive me for the Messiah, and acknowledge my Doctrine to be of God, must be *taught of God*, according to the prediction of the Prophets; and on his part he must both *hear and learn of the Father*, he must attend, that is, to his Instructions, and comply with them. For if he shall refuse to *hear the Father*, he can never acknowledge me, who came from him: but if he will *hear and learn of him*, and consequently be *taught by him*, he will readily *come to me* also.

So that the Words contain, as I have already observ'd, the Character of those Persons, who are qualified and dispos'd to receive the Christian Doctrine, when it is publish'd to them.

And this I judge a proper Argument to begin with. For should I be able to produce never so convincing proofs of the Truth of Christianity; yet if those who hear me should be utterly indispos'd to consider and receive them, all my discourse must be necessarily lost upon such men. And therefore 'tis remarkable, that our Saviour, in divers other places as well as this, doth ascribe the Infidelity of his Hearers to the Indisposition of their Minds, as the true cause of it; and that too an Indisposition proceeding from some fault either in their Tempers or Practices: as on the contrary he declareth who were in a fair way to become his Disciples, namely, such as were of a Temper capable of considering and receiving Truth, when it should be propos'd to them.

Joh. 8. 47.

Thus, *He that is of God, heareth God's words: ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God.*

And

And again, *To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into world, that I might bear witness to the Truth. Every one that is of the Truth heareth my Voice.* Joh. 18. 37.

Neither is this asserted by our Lord, without evident Reason, as will appear to any one, who considers this matter fairly.

Christianity lays it's claim to a Divine Original. Both our Lord himself, and all who call themselves his Disciples, affirm that it is a Revelation from God. The Adversaries of this Religion say on the contrary, that it is the Product of Superstition or Design, and consequently that both its Original and Progress are wholly owing to humane Weakness, or Policy, that is, Wick- edness; (for such would a Policy to invent and propagate a false Religion, and thereby to impose upon the Understandings and Consciences of men be justly reputed.) How then must this Con- troversie be decided? Why by such Evidence as a matter of this nature is capable of; by such Proofs as are fit to be alleged for the truth of a Divine Revelation, and proper to convince the judgment of a reasonable Creature. But who shall Judge of this Evidence? Why every man must be al- low'd to judge for himself, and every man to whom such Evidence is propos'd, is without ques- tion oblig'd, at his utmost peril, to judge impar- tially. But the Man that is ignorant of Almighty God, or estranged from him, especially whofo- ever is an Enemy to God, as being of a disposi- tion and temper opposite to that of the Divine Nature, must necessarily be unfit to judge of this kind.



kind of Evidence. If this Religion should prove to be divinely reveal'd, as it pretends, such a man would probably think it his Interest, to be sure it would be his Inclination, to make all the Objections, and to raise all the Cavils, that he could possibly invent, to invalidate the Proofs of it. At least he would not easily, nor clearly discern the force of the Arguments alleged for it.

Whereas on the other hand, Whosoever hath been *taught of God*, whosoever hath *heard, and learn'd of the Father*, whosoever hath attain'd to right conceptions of him, and is reconcil'd in his Mind to him, such a Man is well prepar'd to attend to whatsoever it shall please God farther to make known to him, he will easily and clearly discern the force of any good Evidence which shall be produc'd for a Revelation which is truly Divine, and will be naturally ready and forward to embrace it.

But to come to the Words themselves, in treating of which, it will be proper to consider these three particulars.

- I. In what way and manner God may be said to *teach* Men, in order to their receiving any new Revelation from him.
- II. Who they are, that may be said to *have heard, and learn'd of the Father*, in order to the same end.
- III. What Qualifications are requisite both to the *hearing and learning of the Father*, and *coming to the Son*.

Let

Let us consider in what way and manner God may be said to teach Men, in order to their receiving any new Revelation from him. *It is written in the Prophets, They shall be all taught of God.* I.

The teaching of God which the Prophets, and particularly *Isaiah*, in the place before cited, refers to, seems, as I have already hinted, to be that more plain and plentiful Instruction, which was to be communicated to Men, in the days of the Messiah. But our Saviour, in applying this Prophecy, seems also to take in all that previous Teaching of God, whereby he had prepar'd Men for the receiving him, when he should come. For the same God, who by his Providence had reserv'd so large a communication of Divine Knowledge, for the times of the Messiah, had from one Generation to another, been disposing the World for such farther communications as he should think proper for it; not having in any age or place, *left men without witness of himself.* It may be reasonable therefore upon this occasion, to consider the several ways, in which men might be said to be taught of God, in order to their receiving any farther Revelation from him. And I shall name these four.

1. Men were taught of God, in order to this end, by the Works of Creation and Providence.
2. By the Suggestions and Dictates of their own Consciences.
3. By some extraordinary Persons raised up by Providence, and qualified to teach others.

By

4.

By the secret Motions and Influences of the Divine Spirit upon the Minds of Men.

I shall only take a short view of each of these.

1.

Men may be said to have been taught of God, by the Works of Creation and Providence.

From that vast number of Beings, which have been form'd by God, their Variety, Excellency, Beauty, and Order, together with the constant care he taketh of all that he hath form'd, and the abundant Provision he hath made for every Being, suitable to it's Nature, there are plain Intimations and Instructions given by the Deity, to those Creatures whom he hath made capable of observing and contemplating his Works.

And this I may take for granted, without any farther proof, will be allow'd by those, for whose use I principally design my following Discourses, such I mean as seriously own the Being and the Providence of the Almighty. And I need not labor to express my self farther upon this head, than in the Words of the Psalmist, which a Deist will subscribe to as true, though not as spoken by an inspired Author.

Psal. 19. 1,

2,

*The Heavens declare the Glory of God: and the Firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech; and night unto night sheweth knowledge.*

ver. 3,

4,

And this is a way in which God hath taught all Mankind at once; for as it there follows, *There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end*

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of the World. And therefore the Apostle justly pronounces them inexcusable, who have not by this way of instruction attain'd to the knowledge of God. *That which may be known of God, saith Rom. i. 19, he is manifest among them, that is, among the Heathens; for God hath shew'd it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal Power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse; those namely who do not by this instruction from the visible World, discern the invisible things of God.*

God hath taught men also by the Suggestions and Dictates of their own Minds.

Nor will this be denied by any, who seriously own a God and a Providence; viz. that there is in man a power of Understanding and Reasoning, which he hath receiv'd from God in the very frame of his Nature, whereby he is enabled to discern the Being, and in some measure to know the Will of his Maker; as also a Conscience, whereby he reflects upon his own behaviour; and is either pleas'd or displeas'd with himself, and fill'd with Hopes or Fears, according as he acts agreeably or disagreeably to the judgment of his own Mind.

Whether there are innate Ideas in the Souls of Men; or whether only we are capacitated in the use of our Faculties to form such conceptions as these, and so framed that we naturally do it, is not material, as to the subject I am now upon. It is enough, if this be any way the result of our

Rom. 2. 14,

Ver. 15.

Frame and Constitution; for then it must be one of the ways in which God, who is the Author of our Beings, hath given us Instruction. And this again cannot be express'd better, than in the words of St. Paul; *When the Gentiles, says he, which have not the Law, do by nature the things contain'd in the Law, these having not the Law are a Law unto themselves, which (show the work (or matter) of the Law written in their hearts, their Conscience also bearing Witness, and their thoughts between themselves accusing or else excusing one another.*

3.

God may be said farther to have taught men, by some extraordinary Persons rais'd up by Providence, and qualified to instruct others.

Such we Christians believe the Patriarchs, together with Moses and the Prophets to have been, namely Persons rais'd up on purpose, and some of them sent with a special Commission from God, to teach men. But because in these Discourses we are to take no more for granted, than those we have to do with will allow, I shall assert no more under this head, than what will be acknowledg'd by every serious Deist, *viz.* that there have been in all ages Persons of more enlarg'd and improv'd Understandings, and more refin'd Morals than the Vulgar, who have both by their discourses, and writings, and practices instructed other men with respect to Divine and Spiritual Matters. Such particularly we know there were, not inconsiderable for their Number, and of very great Reputation, both among the Greeks and

Romans



*Romans*, some of which have by their Writings transmitted to us their conceptions concerning God and Providence, and the difference between Moral Good and Evil, as also the spirituality and immortality of the humane Soul, and at least the high probability of a future state of retribution, of all which they have discours'd admirably well.

And of this rank we may at least reckon the Patriarchs mention'd in the Old Testament, who practis'd, and taught the Worship of the One true God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, and gave an Example of Virtuous Lives and Conversations; as also *Moses*, the great Law-giver among the *Jews*, who particularly inculcated this prime Doctrine of Religion, that there is but one God, the Creator and Governor of all, and gave abundance of Excellent Moral Precepts, besides the Ceremonial, to that People; as likewise the Prophets which appear'd in that Nation, and made it their business to preach up the Doctrines of Piety, and Virtue. Whoever owns a Providence, and allows the difference between Moral Good and Evil, must and will grant that such men as these, wherever they were to be found, were the Instruments of Providence, for instructing and improving their fellow-creatures, and consequently that this was another way of *God's teaching men*.

God may also be said to have taught men; by the secret Motions and Influences of his Holy Spirit upon their Minds.

4.

This I am well satisfied the Holy Scriptures do assert throughout, and 'tis, in part at least, this kind of *teaching*, which those passages in the Books of the Prophets, refer'd to by our Saviour in the Text, seem to mean; neither is it any more than what I think those whom we have to do with in this Controversie will allow.

There is indeed nothing more reasonable to be believ'd of God, even without a Revelation, than that he who form'd our Spirits, which are finite, and intirely dependent upon their Maker, should be at all times ready to influence them in a way proper to their make, conversing himself intimately with them, enlightning those understandings which he hath given us, by rays darted from himself, the Fountain of Light, secretly admonishing and assisting our Souls, according as they apply themselves to him, and become capable of receiving Influences from him.

This is well exprest by *Elihu* in *Job*, who being suppos'd not to have been of the race of *Israel*, may be reckon'd to have spoken in the person of  
 Job 32. 8. *Deist*; *There is, says he, a spirit in man, and the Inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding.* But we need not search nicely for a Proof, that this has been the sense of those, who have been only under the dispensation of meer Nature, and not enlighten'd by Revelation. 'Tis well known to all that are acquainted with the Writings of the Philosophers, that this is frequently acknowledg'd by them. *Nemo vir magnus sine aliquo afflath divino unquam fuit*, is a famous saying of *Cicero's*, *There was never yet any great Man, but who had something*

*Cic. de nat.  
Deor. l. 2.*

something of *divine Inspiration*, in which he deliver'd not his own sense only, but that of Mankind. *Socrates* is likewise famous for his pretending to a constant, at least very frequent direction and influence from the Deity, who I think, if any other among the Pagan Philosophers, may be fairly allow'd such a pretence.

And it is no Objection against this way of *God's teaching*, that we cannot tell in what manner he influenceth our Spirits, any more than it is against his having made us, that we are wholly ignorant how we were formed by him.

This may suffice to be spoken to the *first* particular I propos'd, I proceed to the next, *viz.* to consider,

Who they are, that may be said to have *heard and learn'd of the Father*, in order to their receiving any new Revelation from him. *Every man therefore that hath heard and learn'd, &c.*

II.

To this I answer in the General, Those men have *heard and learn'd of the Father*, in order to this end, who have attended to the Instructions given them by God, in any of the *four* ways above-mentioned, and have improv'd them to the benefit of their Spirits. But more particularly they may be reduced to these *two* following sorts.

Those who have attain'd to worthy apprehensions concerning God and natural Religion.

I.

Those who have together with these apprehensions

2.

sions fix in their Minds an honest purpose and resolution to act agreeably to them.

By taking a short view of these two particulars, we shall easily perceive, both that these are the results of *God's teaching* men, and that they are each of them preparatory to the receiving farther communications from him.

1.

Such men have *heard and learn'd of the Father*, who have attain'd to worthy apprehensions concerning God and Natural Religion.

By worthy apprehensions of God, I mean, that they should conceive of him, as a Being infinite in all Perfection, and particularly in those we call the Moral Perfections of the Divine Nature, commonly express'd by the general term of *Holiness*, comprehending the Truth, the Justice, and the Goodness of God; that they should think of him, as the Original of all Being, the great Maker and Preserver of the World, and the Supreme Lord and Governour of it; that they should look upon him as the great Parent of the intellectual part of the Universe, who hath a tender care of and concern for this his Off-spring; that they should apprehend him to be a Being infinitely good to all his Works, and especially propitious to those his Creatures, who have always retain'd, or are willing to return to the temper of dutiful and obedient children; who, as on the one hand he will not suffer his Laws to be violated, and his Authority contemn'd, without making the Transgressors sensible and afraid of his displeasure; so on the other hand also he will be ready to compassionate in  
all

all compassionate cases, and to make all such allowances as are proper to be made by a Creator to his Creatures.

By worthy apprehensions of natural Religion, I mean, that they should see and acknowledge the eternal and immutable difference between moral good and evil, together with the necessary and indispensable Obligation a reasonable creature is under to chuse the one, and refuse the other; that they should discern the fitness of yielding Reverence, and Love, Worship, and Obedience to our Maker; of exercising Justice and Charity one towards another; of subjecting our Flesh to our Spirits, and reducing our Appetites and Passions under the direction and government of Understanding and Reason; of improving our Minds, as our principal part, and using our several Faculties according to the nature and design of each of them. These I take to be worthy apprehensions of God and natural Religion, and such as will be entertain'd by all those, who are *taught of God*, and have not only *heard*, but *learn'd of the Father*.

And whosoever hath these Apprehensions well settled in his Mind, will be always ready to embrace a Doctrine which comes from God, and approves it self to be worthy of him; he will be apt to entertain a Revelation as Divine, which renders all the Attributes of God conspicuous and illustrious; he will diligently listen to, and easily believe a fair account of the Goodness of God to the apostate children of men, reconcil'd with his Wisdom and Justice in governing the World; and he will heartily approve an Institution, which thoroughly explains



explains and heightens the Obligations which reasonable Creatures are under to all that is truly good and praise-worthy; that is, he will be well dispos'd to become a Christian, these being (as I hope hereafter to shew) the just Characters of Christianity.

Upon this ground it was, that our Lord gave his approbation to the Judgment of the Scribe, upon his saying there was *one God*, and that for a Man to love this God with all his heart, and to love his Neighbour as himself, was more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices. The Text says, that when Jesus saw that he answer'd discreetly, i. e. when he discover'd so just apprehensions of God, and the nature of Religion in general, he said unto him, *Thou art not far from the Kingdom of God*; as far as his Judgment went at least, he was almost a Disciple of Christ, being well dispos'd to entertain the Doctrine which he taught. But then,

2. There must be added to this, that those who have heard and learn'd of the Father, have together with these Apprehensions fixt in their Minds an honest purpose and resolution to act agreeably to them.

The perfection of a reasonable creature consists in the regularity of his Will and Affections; as much at least, if not more than in the improvement of his Understanding. Nay the very use of any information given to the Understanding is, that it may direct and influence the Will and Affections of the Man; and consequently the great design of all God's teaching, which is without question intended to perfect our Natures, is to improve the temper

temper and disposition of our Souls; so that no man can be said to have *heard and learn'd of the Father*, till he have form'd his temper by the knowledge which is imparted to him from God, and reduc'd his Notions to practice. All the Truths of God are to be receiv'd in the love of them, and the end of their communication is, that we may yield our selves to be directed by them; and he that is arriv'd thus far, has *heard and learn'd of the Father*, in the full sense of that Expression; and after this, can want nothing more towards the entertaining any new Revelation from God, than a fair proposal of it to him.

This is agreeable to what our Saviour hath told us, and what is evident from the nature of the thing, that *If any man will do the will of God, he shall know of his Doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether he speak of himself.* And this 'tis likely was wanting in the Scribe before-mention'd, whom our Saviour declar'd *not to be far from the Kingdom of God*. Had he added to his just apprehensions of Divine truths, a full purpose of mind to yield to their influence, he would not only have approach'd, but enter'd into the Kingdom.

And here, in truth, lies the main difficulty with most men. Their Apprehensions would be more easily set right, if their Wills and Affections were but subdued: but this latter requiring some pains, they too often make their Judgments comply with their Inclinations, and suffer their Wills and Affections to conduct their Understandings.

It may therefore be worth the while to enquire  
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III.

once more, What Qualifications are requisite, both to the *hearing and learning* of the Father, and *coming to the Son*, which was the last particular I propos'd to be consider'd; I shall mention only the three following.

1. A serious and compos'd temper of Spirit.
2. A good degree of Humility.
3. Purity of Heart.

1. A serious and compos'd temper of Spirit.

This is a Qualification necessary in order to proficiency in any other sort of learning, that is of considerable use; and much more is it so, where God is the Teacher, and Religion the Subject of the Enquiry.

God is a great Being, infinitely above us; the thoughts of his Majesty are sufficient to strike an awe into our Minds. He is perfectly pure and holy, he hath full Authority to command us, and an irresistible Power, as well as an undoubted right to govern and controul us; and our Happiness depends intirely upon his favour.

Religion is the solemn Obligation we acknowledge our selves to be under to this excellent Being, whereby we are instructed in his Will, and engag'd to comply with it; and the Christian Religion in particular pretends to be an improvement of that which is natural.

Now these are matters of the greatest Weight, and highest Concernment to us, and consequently such as require the most sedate temper of Mind in those who are conversant about them.

Besides

Besides that the ways in which God teaches men are such as make a very serious attention necessary; 'Tis remarkable, that when our blessed Saviour had in the Text mention'd *hearing and learning of the Father*, he adds in the very next words, *Not that any man hath seen the Father*, intimating thereby that we do not learn of God, as one man learns of another. No, 'tis by serious contemplation of his Works; by frequent retiring into our own Souls, exercising and consulting the best of our Faculties, those I mean of Understanding, and Reason, and Conscience; 'tis by looking out for those who are wiser and better than our selves, and attending to what they shall impart to us of their knowledge in Divine matters; and finally 'tis by cherishing and improving the secret Motions and Influences of the good Spirit of God, and in a due exercise of our Faculties, together with a serious application to God, preparing our selves for the reception of his communications.

How then is it likely, that a man of a fantastical, airy and unthinking temper, should hear and learn of the Father, or come to the Son? 'Tis not in the least probable, that such an one should apply himself to the consideration of these serious Subjects, or give that attention of Mind which is proper; nor can it be thought, that the Holy Spirit of God should attend such light and unfettered minds.

Another Qualification for *hearing and learning of the Father* is, a good degree of Humility.

It becomes a Learner in general to give a defer-

rence to the judgment and authority of those who instruct him; much more is it fit that those who would *learn of God*, should attend to his Instructions with the greatest Humility that is possible. They should have those mean thoughts of themselves which become Creatures, when they are learning of their Maker. They should remember that their Minds are finite and narrow, that their apprehensions of things are very imperfect at the best, that they are fallible, nay exceeding liable to be mistaken of themselves, and consequently do stand in need of the constant direction and guidance of the first and great Mind. They should consider farther, that they are altogether unworthy of such a favor, as to be *taught of God*, forasmuch as they cannot but be conscious of very great disorder in their Natures, too much indisposition to do, and consequently to know the Will of God. All these considerations will be apt to make them humble, and thereby dispose them to *hear and learn of the Father*.

For by this means they will be brought to acknowledge the reasonableness of those great duties, which natural Religion enjoins, *viz.* submitting and resigning their Wills intirely to the Will of their Sovereign Lord; being well contented with his disposal, and fully satisfied with that share of the good things of life, which he is pleas'd to allow them; depending upon him, and acknowledging him in all their ways; as also demeaning themselves towards other men with a regard due to those of the same nature with themselves, however they may differ from them in some accidental respects. And



And by the same means they will be dispos'd also *to come to the Son of God*, whose Institution lays before us abundance of humbling considerations, drawn from the weakness and corruption of humane Nature, as well as from the guilt we have contracted; and gives us in charge such Precepts as cannot possibly consist with pride or haughtiness of spirit, such as condescending to those of the lowest rank for their good, bearing affronts, forgiving injuries, returning good for evil, and the like; upon which account our Lord saw it fit to forewarn those that pretended to be his Disciples, that one necessary condition of being so, was *to humble themselves, and become as little children*. Mat. 18. 3, 4.

Nay farther, this Humility will dispose those who are endued with it, to allow, that God may possibly reveal to us some Truths of concernment and use, which we could not have found out ourselves, and which when discover'd in part, we may not be able fully to grasp and comprehend; as well as he may oblige us to some Duties, which may lie cross to certain inclinations and propensions that we may have contracted, which duties may notwithstanding be very reasonable in themselves and good for us. A competent degree of Humility will dispose us to think on this manner; and consequently will render us capable of Divine Instruction.

Which it will yet farther do, by qualifying us to partake of the Illumination and Assistance of the Spirit of that God, who, as we are assured both by  
Scrip.

## 22 The Qualifications requisite towards

x Pet. 5. 5. Scripture and Reason, *represseth the proud; but giveth Grace to the humble.*

3. The last Qualification I mention'd was Purity of Heart; by which I mean, not only a freedom from guile and hypocrisie, but also, in a good degree from all these other vitious habits, that defile the Soul, and particularly a being so far dis-entangled from sensual and worldly inclinations, that the mind may be tolerably at liberty in it's searches after truth, having no strong byas upon it to incline it the wrong way, nothing whereby the Understanding must be unavoidably blinded, or the judgment distorted.

'Tis acknowledg'd by every serious Deist, that as God is a pure and holy Being, so the design of true Religion is to render us like to him, and consequently to refine and purifie our Spirits, by raising us above the things of sense and this present life. And this we Christians affirm to be the great design of that Religion which we profess. Now nothing can make us more indisposed to *hear and learn* either of *the Father or the Son*, than strong habits of Vice indulg'd by us, or, which comes to the same issue, being deeply immerst in the sensual and animal life. This was the reason why *Aristotle* pronounc'd young men unfit to hear Lectures in moral Philosophy, namely because of the vehemency of their sensual inclinations and passions. Christianity, in confidence of its reasonableness, together with the assistance and strength it offers, proposes it self to every age, as well as each condition of men: but still this must be own'd, that  
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by how much the more sensual or worldly-minded any man is, by so much the more he is in danger of having his Understanding byas'd in his enquiries after the truths of Religion. 'Tis an uneasy thing to own a truth, which directly opposes it self to the bent of our inclinations; and therefore a man that is resolutely vicious, will rather chuse to have his understanding misled, and his judgment brib'd, than yield his assent to such truths, as he very well knows would prove a constant vexation to his Spirit.

Besides, that as in the former instances, so here also, it cannot be expected that the Holy Spirit of God, by whom the minds of all good men are illuminated and assisted in their searches after divine knowledge, should co-habit or co-operate with a soul grossly impure and vicious.

Thus I have dispatch'd the *three* particulars I at first propos'd, and the sum of what I have been saying is in short this; That whosoever will take upon him to judge of the truth of reveal'd Religion, or *that* which pretends to be so, ought to be a man, who has first well consider'd, and yielded to the convictions of *that* which is natural; and that there are certain Qualifications necessary in order to the considering and entertaining either natural Religion, or reveal'd.

The application I would make of the whole shall be only in *two* words.

I infer that if any person, who is not furnish'd  
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with the Qualifications above-mention'd in a good degree, and for want of them hath not been *taught of God*, shall yet take upon him to deny the truth of the Christian Religion, he is to be neglected as one that is no competent Judge in this dispute. Jesus Christ may be the Son of God, and the Saviour of Mankind, and his Religion may have had its original from Heaven, as we Christians profess heartily to believe, for any thing such a man knows, or can know to the contrary.

'Tis therefore remarkable what I hinted in the beginning of this discourse, that our blessed Saviour doth upon all occasions ascribe the unbelief of his Hearers to the indisposition of their tempers, to their pride and vain-glory, their sensuality and love of the present World, their ignorance of God and of the nature of Religion in general, to their affected blindness, and the wilful hardness of their hearts; and the Apostles likewise do the same.

And in like manner, if Infidelity has prevail'd in a high degree in the Age and Nation in which we live, we may by a very little observation find out the true grounds and reasons of it.

A considerable number of those who reject Christianity, do at the same time openly express their contempt of all Religion in general; and not only so, but even of every thing that is serious and of weight in humane life. They are men of light and inconsiderate tempers, who very hardly admit of any serious thoughts even about the common affairs of the World; Such whose time is wasted in sport and luxury, who have never improv'd or exercised their higher Faculties, according to the design of  
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their Natures, nor furnish'd their Heads with any solid materials to think upon.

There are others who are not it may be altogether so airy and unthinking; but yet being thoroughly vitious, violently addicted to the gratifying their sensual Inclinations, or deeply engag'd in the love and pursuit of this vain World, however serious and compos'd they may sometimes be, when they concern themselves about secular affairs, they put the thoughts of God and Religion far from them, as creating uneasiness to their Minds, disturbing and interrupting them in their Enjoyments, and raising continual scruples and doubts and fears within them.

There are some few besides, not to be reduc'd to either of the former ranks, who yet by their supercilious, and scornful way of treating reveal'd Religion, discover such a degree of haughtiness and self-conceit, such a vain opinion of their own Understandings and ways of thinking, and such a scorn and disdain with respect to all that shall presume to differ from them, as plainly shews them not at all to be under the government of that Religion which is natural.

Now whenever the Question is concerning the truth of Christianity, it cannot with any shew of reason be refer'd to these mens judgments. They are either wholly unconcern'd in the matter, or too evidently prejudic'd to judge impartially; so that there lies an Appeal from them to the more serious, modest, humble and honest part of Mankind.

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I would seriously admonish these sorts of men (if there be any such that now hear me) both of the Unreasonableness and the Danger of the course they take.

'Tis altogether unreasonable for them to pretend to pass their censure upon what is not within their cognisance, what they either never have at all consider'd, or never yet were in a temper fit to think of.

And 'tis extremely dangerous, because that temper which renders them unfit to consider and judge in this case is vitious in a notorious degree. Levity and Pride, Impurity and Dishonesty, are some of the grossest stains, and vilest reproaches of humane Nature. If any man apprehend not aright of God, and of natural Religion, especially when he has had great advantages for his instruction, if he have refus'd or neglected to exercise his Faculties upon these subjects, or if having attain'd to just apprehensions, he yet *withholds the truth in unrighteousness*, such a man lives and acts besides the great design and end of his Nature, and must necessarily be accountable to his Maker, first for not approving himself a *Man*; and in the next place because by that means he fail'd of becoming a *Christian*.

To conclude, it seems not in the least unworthy of God, to offer such a Revelation to Men, and in such a way and manner, as that it shall prove a *Test*, to try and distinguish their Tempers, so that if they are but tolerably serious, humble, and honest, they will be apt to discern it's evidence and follow



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## *the receiving a Divine Revelation.*

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follow it's directions, they will (according to our Lord's expression) *justify God*, by complying with his design; but if they are of the contrary temper, they will *frustrate the counsel of God*, intended for their good: if they are of the *remissive* *disposition*, the well-dispos'd towards eternal life, they will *be glad, and glorify the word of the Lord*; but if they are otherwise dispos'd, they will perhaps *tradit and blaspheme*, at least they will *put away the word of God from them, and judge themselves unworthy of everlasting life*. This I take to be the case of the Christian Revelation; so that it is of great concernment to those who will enquire into the truth of it, to examine well *what Spirit they are of*.

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F I N I S.

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